

THE AMERICA MY GRANDCHILDREN WILL NEVER KNOW

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There is a natural tendency as one gets older to become nostalgic about the past. In reality, things were usually not as bad or as good as we imagine them. Even with that understanding, I maintain that America is only a shadow of its former self and my grandchildren will live and die without knowing the nation that once was.

My grandchildren will never know the America I knew as a boy in a small West Virginia town, and they are poorer because of that.

Realizing that America was and is a multicultural nation and there have always been good guys and bad guys in our midst, there were some things generally true. Innocence is one of the first things that comes to mind. We had confidence in our leaders and were shocked when a crook was revealed. We trusted and respected anyone in uniform, even the mailman.

I remember an America where our teachers were obeyed, respected, and maybe feared. We knew that if we received a paddling at school, we would get one at home. That was before the graduates of Columbia took control of the educational system. My three most respected and loved teachers were the ones who were the most demanding.

I remember when the Bible was read and prayers said each morning in the public schools. Today, the schools are nut factories often filled with uneducated, unprincipled, and uncaring teachers and rebellious, resentful, and raucous students. Some kids go on to college but only 55% receive a degree within six years. One reason 45% drop out is that most college freshmen read on a seventh grade level.

I remember an America when every high school graduate had basic knowledge about America, the world, and their obligations to work hard to make a good life. I remember when every student in elementary school learned basic math, facts about government, memorized the *Preamble to the Constitution*, the *Gettysburg Address*, the *Bill of Rights*, the *Wreck of the Hesperus*, *Inchcape Rock*, and was familiar with Poe, Hawthorne, Coolidge, Irving, etc. And a weekly book report, written and read, was the norm.

I remember an America when men stood when a woman entered the room; when you tipped your hat to a lady; when you removed your hat when entering a building and would not even think of eating while wearing a hat; and when a gentleman always asked a lady, "Do you mind if I smoke?" Moreover, if a crude man carelessly cursed in a woman's presence, he would blush and ask to be forgiven. How quaint. And smoking and cursing women were as scarce as white dinosaurs in Manhattan.

I remember an America when we walked quietly and respectfully by a home with a gold star hanging in the window. We knew that some father, brother, or son had been slaughtered on faraway battlefields with strange names such as Iwo Jima, Corregidor, Coral Sea, Battle of the Bulge, Anzio, Heartbreak Ridge, Inchon, Pusan, and many others.

I remember an America when we never locked our doors day or night, when the iceman had access to our icebox for deliveries.

I remember an America when neighbors bossed anyone's kid around if needed. Even a swat on the rear. This was before the fanatics at Child Protection Agency, trying to do good, took control and destroyed a vast number of families.

I remember an America when families could watch any television show together and never be embarrassed. The most risqué show was when Milton Berle, dressed as a woman, hit other stars with his purse.

I remember an America when men would shake hands on a \$50,000 business deal and both kept their word.

I remember when no man suggested he had a woman in his body. It never happened. And if anyone had suggested the possibility of same-sex "marriage," he would have been certified insane.

I remember an America when a girl got pregnant (a very seldom occurrence) she was a shame (but not rejected) to her family and visited grandma for a few months. The child was often reared as a sibling or cousin or was adopted by a deserving family.

I remember an America when every life was sacred and it was a major shame, scandal, and sin if a woman had her own child butchered within her womb.

I remember an America when a politician who disgraced himself, his family, and his party, quickly apologized, resigned and took the next plane or train to his back water town to live in obscurity until his death.

I remember an America when you could discuss serious issues with people who believed the opposite yet both would remain friends.

I remember an America when we loved our dogs, always stray mongrels, but when they got old or sick, we shot them and lamented it for a few days but realized that they were just animals.

I remember an America when parents were loved, respected, if not feared, and the thought of talking back was never a possibility.

I remember when your family name was almost sacred and the thought of bringing disgrace to it was anathema.

No, my America was not perfect, but it was pleasant, peaceful, and proper, and my grandchildren will only see some glimpse of it from their own principled family but not from the nation as a whole.

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